

Test questions from lecture 1

Example 1

Consider the claim “the exploitation in Qatar was wrong”.

Which of the following statements is the most accurate?

- (A) Cultural relativists can't say this.
- (B) According to subjectivism, it's false.
- (C) Subjectivists won't disagree if you'd claim that the exploitation was fine.
- (D) Subjectivists won't agree that there was exploitation.

Example 2

Consider George, who can accept a job at Shell, yet he's opposed to the oil industry.

Which of the following statements is the least accurate?

- (A) George should take the job according to utilitarians if he then donates some of the money he earns.
- (B) George should not take the job according to utilitarians because the oil industry has bad consequences for many people.
- (C) George should not take the job according to Kantians because he doesn't want anyone to work there.
- (D) George should only take the job according to utilitarians if he knows that others would accept it if he declines.

Met opmerkingen [WJ(W1)]: Incorrect:

Cultural relativism (just like subjectivism or objectivism) is a theory about the nature of morality. So relativists can say actions are right or wrong, but let such claims depend on cultural standards (rather than universal or personal standards).

In this case, they can say the exploitation was wrong if it's wrong according to the norms of the culture in which it happened.

Met opmerkingen [WJ(W2)]: Incorrect:

According to subjectivism, some action is wrong (for some person) if that person feels bad about it. Most people feel bad about exploitation, and in that case, the action is indeed wrong (i.e. even for subjectivists).

Met opmerkingen [WJ(W3)]: Correct:

Subjectivists read your view "the exploitation was fine" as "you feel fine about the exploitation". They won't disagree that *you* feel fine about it. (Compare taste: if you like green, I won't deny that *you* like green, even when I prefer other colours.)

In contrast to subjectivists, objectivists can disagree with you. For, they don't let wrongness depend on personal standards, but on universal standards. (Exploitation is wrong according to most universal standards - we'll see about that in the next lectures.)

Met opmerkingen [WJ(W4)]: Incorrect:

Subjectivism, here, is subjectivism about morality, not about non-moral facts. Subjectivists about morality don't deny that it is an objective matter whether there was exploitation in Qatar. They only deny that it is an objective matter whether such exploitation is *wrong*. (see Lecture notes 1)

Met opmerkingen [WJ(W5)]: Correct:

If he earns a lot of money, and he donates that, he can help many other people. And that's exactly what one should do according to utilitarianism.

Met opmerkingen [WJ(W6)]: Incorrect:

Utilitarianism (or at least the act utilitarian variant that we'll discuss in lecture 4), is about the consequences of one's action (or one's career choice in this case). So not about the consequences of the whole industry in which one works.

Met opmerkingen [WJ(W7)]: Correct:

The basic Kantian advice is: don't do what you want others not to do.

George is opposed to the oil industry, and doesn't want anyone to work there. If so, he shouldn't work in it himself.

Met opmerkingen [WJ(W8)]: Correct:

This one is a bit more complicated, but the basic idea is this: if you won't be replaced, then you can make a difference to the corporation's functioning. If the corporation is bad for people (as George believes Shell is), and you can make a difference to the corporation's functioning by not taking the job, then you should not take the job.

In lecture 4, we'll make this more precise. (Basically, we'll need to determine your options and calculate for each their expected value.)

Correct:

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In lecture 4, we'll make this more precise. (Basically, we'll need to determine your options and calculate for each their expected value.)

Cf. MacAskill, p. 275:

"if Sophie were not to take the petrochemical engineering job, someone else would. So Sophie only makes others worse off if more CO₂ is produced as a result of her working in that job than as a result of her replacement working in that job. But it seems unlikely that Sophie's taking that job would result in more CO₂ being produced than would have been produced had her replacement taken the job."